

PRESS RELEASE

The Cleveland Museum of Art

Public Relations / 11150 East Blvd. / Cleveland, Ohio 44106 / 216 421-7340

March 1, 1979

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MUSEUM EXHIBITION ILLUSTRATES DRAWING PRACTICES OF LATE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Perhaps at no period in the history of Western art has drawing had a more important role in the creation of works of art or in the training and development of artists than in Italy during the late Renaissance. The Draftsman's Eye: Late Italian Renaissance Schools and Styles, an exhibition on view at The Cleveland Museum of Art from March 6 through April 22, 1979, examines the practice and teaching of drawing in the studios of late Italian Renaissance artists, and in the academies, or schools for artists founded in the 16th century. It also illustrates the distinctive drawing styles which developed in the major artistic centers of Italy.

The exhibition consists of 125 drawings and a small number of engravings by Italian Renaissance masters. Approximately 50 works are from the collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art, with more than 80 outstanding loans from other American museums and private collections. The drawings, which range from sketches to highly finished compositions, include studies of heads and figures, landscapes, designs for architecture and decorative objects, and religious and classical subjects. Most are executed in the preferred media of the time, pen or brush and ink or red and black chalks, with several works in silverpoint.

In the Renaissance, apprentices and students began their training by copying drawings and other works of accomplished artists, who themselves learned by copying the works of other masters. In this exhibition, for example, are several drawings after figures in Michelangelo's fresco of the Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel.

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Michelangelo's treatment of forms--illustrated here by his red chalk study for a nude youth in the Sistine Chapel ceiling--also influenced a number of other figural drawings in this exhibition.

Sketching from nature and the nude model were further steps in the artist's learning process. A concern for scientific accuracy led even to the study of cadavers and skeletons, illustrated here in several drawings and in engravings of the period depicting artists at work in their studios. The growing naturalism in art is also seen in the landscape drawings, such as Fra Bartolommeo's Farm on the Slope of a Hill, Titian's Trees Near Some Water, and Annibale Carracci's Eroded River Bank with Trees and Roots and Landscape with a Boat.

Particularly during the Renaissance, artists employed drawings to explore and develop designs for works in other media--paintings, prints, architecture, and sculpture. Many of the drawings exhibited here served such functions. Agnolo Bronzino's drawing of a male nude is a study for a figure in his fresco of the Martyrdom of St. Lawrence in the Medici church of San Lorenzo in Florence. Two drawings by Luca Cambiaso are among a number of studies which the artist is known to have made for a painting of The Annunciation in the church of SS. Annunziata di Portoria in Genoa. In making these studies, the artist may have been following the advice of contemporary drawing treatises which suggested doing different studies of a subject, choosing the best for the final work.

Some of the drawings in the exhibition are grouped according to region or school. Others are grouped thematically, to show, for example, how artists from different schools treated similar subjects.

The exhibition has been organized by the Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings with guest curator Dr. Edward J. Olszewski, associate professor of art history at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, and is supported by a

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grant from the Ohio Program in the Humanities, a state-based agency of the National Endowment for the Humanities. A fully-illustrated catalog prepared by Dr. Olszewski, with an introductory essay and scholarly commentaries on each of the drawings in the exhibition, can be ordered from the Museum's Sales Desk.

Gallery talks on the exhibition will be given at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 28, and Sunday, April 1. A three-part lecture series, entitled Masterpieces of Painting and Drawing from the Italian Renaissance, is also offered in conjunction with the exhibition. The lectures will be given by Ronnie Zakon, instructor in the Department of Art History and Education, at 1:30 p.m. on three Thursdays--March 15, March 29, and April 5.

The Draftsman's Eye: Late Italian Renaissance Schools and Styles is installed in the Prints and Drawings Galleries on the Museum's ground floor.

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